

6. Comprehensive Plan Analysis

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANALYSIS SOMERSET GABLES

The addition of Somerset Gables Academy a pre-K to 8th grade charter school to the University Baptist Church property is consistent with the goals, policies and objectives of the City of Coral Gables' Comprehensive Plan.

The City's Comprehensive Plan defines school overcrowding:

Policy EDU-1.2.1. Beginning January 1, 2008, the adopted LOS standard for all public school facilities within and served by the City of Coral Gables is 100% utilization of Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) Capacity (With Relocatable Classrooms).

This coming school year, Florida's class size amendment must be implemented at the individual classroom level. That will diminish the capacity of the already overcrowded schools serving Coral Gables because fewer students will be allowed in each classroom. Hence, the city's already overcapacity schools will be able to admit even fewer new students making the need for additional public schools more pressing.

The City of Coral Gables and the Miami Dade School District have acknowledged that two of the three public elementary schools serving the city are currently overcrowded. With more than 600 students, Coral Gables Elementary is at 121% of Florida Inventory of School Houses ("FISH") capacity. With more than 1,000 students, Sunset Elementary is at 106% of FISH capacity. As a result, countless Gables-area children are currently unable to attend the public school closest to where they live and are assigned to schools outside of the City.

In its Comprehensive Plan, the City has affirmatively committed itself to finding solutions to school overcrowding:

Objective EDU-1.1. The City shall promote the reduction of school overcrowding in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, while striving to attain an optimum level of service (LOS) as defined in this Element. The City will work to provide additional solutions to overcrowding so that public school enrollment in the City of Coral Gables will meet state requirements for class size by September 1, 2010.

The proposed Somerset Gables Charter School would offer relief to some of the overcrowding in time for the City's September 1, 2010 deadline, and the City is not currently to our knowledge working on any other solution.

The City's Comprehensive Plan identifies the University Baptist Church (UBC) location as a logical one for an educational facility:

Policy EDU-1.3.1. Where possible, Miami-Dade County Public Schools should seek sites for future educational facility development which are adjacent to existing or planned public recreation areas, community centers, libraries, or other compatible civic uses for the purpose of encouraging joint use facilities or the creation of logical focal points for community activity.

The Somerset Gables public charter school is sponsored by Miami-Dade County Public Schools and will be a "Miami-Dade County Public School." UBC occupies a large multi-acre institutional facility on an entire City block and is immediately adjacent to the City's Public Library and the Youth Center (a community center and public recreation area).

The requested change in land use to Community Services and Facilities is the perfect category. UBC's buildings and lands serve a community function by allowing the City's senior program to take place in UBC's classrooms and public assembly spaces. The proposed land use category will also allow for the continuation of religious use in addition to expansion of the school use on the property.

The definition of the land use category as found in Table FLU.5 Other Land Uses is:

Buildings and adjacent land areas that serve a public and/or community function, including local, state, and federal government facilities; public and private schools and educational facilities (excluding University); medical and health facilities; and religious institutions.